

SR 164 Corridor Study

Corridor Working Group Session

Meeting Summary

Meeting date: February 11, 2005

Location: Auburn City Hall – Council Chambers (25 W Main Street – Auburn, WA)

Attendees:

Partners in attendance:

Dennis Dowdy, Laura Philpot – City of Auburn
Steve Taylor, Woody Ward – Muckleshoot Tribe
Les Johnson – City of Enumclaw
Doug Johnson, Mark Melroy, Doug Walters – King County
Allison Dobbins – Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC)
Seth Stark – WSDOT, Urban Planning Office

Partners not in attendance:

Rich Wagner – City of Auburn
Don Sims – Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), Northwest Region

Others in attendance:

Jim Bitney, Dennis Swanson – Citizens for Safety and the Environment (CSE)
Lance Miller, Molly Hammerton – Clear Channel/Bill Graham Presents White River Amphitheatre
Jermaine Hannon – Federal Highway Administration Intern assigned to PSRC
Kamuron Gurol – WSDOT, Urban Planning Office
Ron Paananen – WSDOT, Northwest Region
Keith Sabol, Neal Denno, Pamela Arora – Parsons Transportation Group
Kristine dos Remedios – EnviroIssues

Welcome and Goals for the Day

Kamuron Gurol, WSDOT, welcomed the partners and thanked them for taking the time to attend the Corridor Working Group (CWG) session. Attendees introduced themselves and shared the name of the organization or jurisdiction they were representing.

Seth Stark, WSDOT, reviewed the session agenda and contents of the packet passed out to the group. Seth Stark also reminded the group that getting consensus on the Evaluation Criteria was the most important step of the day, as this document will be important to present at the upcoming public open houses in March and to maintain the project schedule.

Brief Project Update

Comments regarding the December CWG meeting minutes were solicited from the partners. There were none and the minutes were subsequently approved.

Dennis Dowdy, City of Auburn, gave a brief update on the results of a Geotech study recently completed for the area near the old Academy Drive. The City of Auburn has been looking into reopening the road since it failed in the winter of 1996. Large amounts of rainfall and landslides caused the road to slide. In 1996 the roadbed was

restored but it slid again the next winter and has not been reopened since. Auburn undertook a Geotech study to explore what it would take to reopen the road. Though the City had hoped the opposite was true, the study found it would be a great challenge to reopen the road. The slide action is up to 40-feet deep and is on a deep action fault that is active today and will continue to be active over time. Reopening the road would require resources beyond what the City has to put towards that one project. A meeting including WSDOT geotechnical and design engineering staff; Auburn staff; and consultant geotechnical staff for the SR 164 Corridor study will take place later in the afternoon of February 11th to discuss the results in more detail.

Laura Philpot, City of Auburn, also gave a brief update on the ITS Project from the Tri-Party Agreement. The first of two phases will be complete by June 1st of this year. This includes 90% plans for fiber installation, and working with the software vender to get the soft- and hardware purchased. Cameras will be placed along the corridor for viewing the roadway all the way out to Academy Drive. Synchronization will be a major element of this improvement and events will be monitored to improve circulation. The second phase will include the establishment of a traffic management center and making the system information available via a website. WSDOT staff asked and Laura agreed to write up a summary page about the project that could be distributed to the CWG.

**RDP Planning
Process and
RDP
Terminology**

Segment Map

Kamuron had the partners look at the segment map first to get the group oriented to the new segment designations WSDOT will use to discuss issues and solutions for the corridor.

Steve Taylor, Muckleshoot Tribe, suggested that the “Amphitheatre” segment be renamed the “Muckleshoot Segment” in order to better represent what will likely be developed along that segment of the corridor. The urban area along the corridor does not and will not stop just because the Auburn Urban Growth Area stops outside of the “Auburn” segment. Renaming the segment “Muckleshoot” recognizes that it is not a rural segment and the focus should not only be on the Amphitheatre but also on other development that may happen there in the future.

Dennis Swanson and Jim Bitney, Citizen for Safety and the Environment, had some concerns about Steve Taylor’s comments. They noted that the Tribe’s comprehensive plan had not been issued to the public and it will be important to know what the future development plans are along that segment of the corridor in order to manage the infrastructure appropriately. The route through the segment under discussion is a two-lane highway and will likely remain a two-lane highway for some time, further complicating the issues along the corridor.

Steve Taylor acknowledged that the Tribe’s comprehensive plan was still going through internal review and would be released to the public when it is ready, most likely within the next few months.

Keith Sabol, Parsons, clarified that the segments were created and named simply as a way for the team to organize the corridor study process. As a single corridor, SR 164 is too long to study as a whole. In terms of data collection, study and reporting, segmenting the corridor simplifies the process. If a proposed improvement changes a section of the roadway and it happens to fall within a segment boundary, that will be purely coincidence. Solutions for the corridor will be sufficiently localized to make the segment boundaries almost insignificant at the end of the planning process.

Dennis Dowdy agreed that the Tribe is doing the right thing in moving forward with planning in terms of accommodating for other services (like sewer) in the area they may develop.

Partners agreed to change the segment name from "Amphitheatre" to "Muckleshoot." The project team promised to make this change throughout the problem statements and the RDP table of contents in order to be consistent.

Vision Statement

The project team drafted a Vision Statement in order to guide the purpose and future goals for the corridor and give a framework for all of the products and recommended projects resulting from the study. Feedback on the statement was solicited from the partners. Partners agreed, like the SR 169 group had noted, that the wording of the statement in the past tense could be confusing. Partners agreed that the first sentence should be left alone, the "has been" in the second sentence should be replaced with "is," and the rest of the "has beens" should be replaced with "will be."

RDP Terminology

The project team also drafted a "glossary" of Route Development Plan (RDP) terminology in order to make sure the group can stay consistent, avoid mixing and matching terms, and ensure terms such as "alternative" or "project" really mean something in the RDP and to the public.

PSRC suggested, like they had suggested at the SR 169 CWG meeting, that the definition of "preferred alternative" be expanded to include something about addressing and accounting for the agreed upon evaluation criteria, to show that the preferred alternative is a balance of all criteria.

RDP Flowchart

The project team also developed an RDP Flowchart to be presented to the public, based on a much more detailed planning process flowchart. WSDOT staff agreed to send a more detailed flowchart to the partners who were interested. Kamuron reviewed the steps in the flow chart, explaining that the steps outlined were meant to show the public where the first round of Open Houses is in the RDP process and what the next steps are.

WSDOT staff noted the SR 169 CWG Partners suggested some more detail be added to guide the public to what input WSDOT and the partners are looking for at the first round of open houses, as opposed to the second round of open houses. The SR 169 group also suggested that information about next steps, after the RDP implementation stage, be added along with some notation of funding dependency. WSDOT agreed to make these changes for the SR 164 flowchart as well. They also explained that the flowchart would be accompanied by a more detailed "instruction" sheet to guide the public through the purpose of the open houses and the type of comments requested.

Partners approved the RDP Flowchart, pending any necessary changes as identified by the CWG partners at the meeting.

RDP Table of Contents

A draft RDP Table of Contents was distributed to the partners in order to give the group an idea of what will be included in the RDP document and how the plan will be

presented. The table of contents was developed by incorporating a number of different RDPs that were reviewed. The SR 164 RDP may or may not include all of the components currently outlined in the table of contents and sections may be added during the planning process. WSDOT is committed to producing a user-friendly document, moving the more technical information to the back of the document or to the appendices and moving the most relevant information to the front. An Executive Summary will also be developed as a stand alone piece that can be easily reproduced and distributed.

The SR 169 CWG made some other minor adjustments, which will also be incorporated into the SR 164 RDP Table of Contents where appropriate.

RDP Relationship to WTP/HSP/STIP

WSDOT staff wanted to review the relationship between the SR 164 RDP and other state and regional transportation plans. WSDOIT is in the process of updating the Washington Transportation Plan (WTP), which includes the Highway Systems Plan (HSP). The HSP is essentially a wish list of all proposed highway improvement projects ranging from signal improvements to bypasses. The projects identified in an RDP fall into the HSP list. Top priority projects will then be funded via the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP). Groups can also lobby the legislature at the state or federal levels to solicit funds for specific projects that are not currently funded by the STIP. The directly-funded projects are typically not large cost projects but smaller projects. This is where partnerships pay off, as specific funding sources are more likely to be found when there is a lot of support for a project. WSDOT staff still commits to putting together a document to describe this process and include it in the RDP.

Enumclaw mentioned that they have amended their draft comprehensive plan to recognize both the SR 164 and SR 169 Corridor Studies and was wondering if other partner jurisdictions have done the same. Other partners agreed that this was an important step and some have already committed to doing this.

PSRC also shared that, in light of their federal review cycle, they are revamping the region's congestion management system, which is a regional requirement. There are eight steps that need to happen for this, one of which is to identify congestion locations. SR 164 has been identified as one of these locations. Projects that get into the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), which is a financially constrained document and has a shorter list than the HSP, are eligible for federally managed flexible funds.

SR 164 Segments and Draft Segment Problem Statements

Kamuron went over the SR 164 segment descriptions and problem statements with the partners. The problem statements are not intended to be a specific problem list but statements that capture the main issues for each segment. The problem statements are something that the public will have an opportunity to comment on at the open houses.

Comments regarding the draft problem statements were solicited from the group.

The city of Auburn noted that it is important to clarify that segments may include HACs or HALs but are not entirely a HAC or HAL.

Partners agreed that for the Auburn, Academy and Muckleshoot segments, poor

visibility contributes to the safety issues and should be added to these problem statements. For the Rural/Agricultural and Enumclaw segments, poor visibility at key intersections is also an issue and should be added to these problem statements.

It was requested that the Muckleshoot Reservation boundaries be added to the segment map.

At the end of the Enumclaw segment, the crossroad is SR 410, not SR 176.

For the Rural/Agricultural segment, more explanation about safety issues is necessary. Information from the Enumclaw and Muckleshoot segments about traffic backups and safety should be added. This will more clearly identify that there are safety issues due to left turn movements at key intersections.

Partners also agreed that school buses are an issue, in terms of safety and traffic backups, for the entire length of the corridor and should be added as an issue for each segment.

WSDOT staff asked that any additions or amendments to the problem statements be sent to the team by Tuesday, February 15th.

Example Screening Process Using Evaluation Criteria

Keith Sabol, Parsons, then lead the partners through an example screening process of alternatives using the draft Evaluation Criteria. The Evaluation Criteria would be applied on a segment-by-segment basis. The projects would be categorized by type of improvement (i.e., safety or mobility), which reflects the goals and objectives for the corridor. The metrics used were kept to an intuitive level and then a rating was provided, using a "Consumer Reports" -type method, in order to directly compare alternatives. It is important to the project team not to create too complicated of a system and get weighted down in the evaluation process. The team asked the partners for some feedback on the process.

Partners had some concerns and questions about the public support criteria. Keith explained that the team would have some idea of public support for or against certain alternatives based on the open house comments and emails to the project team.

Like the SR 169 group, partners agreed that an inclusive rating for each major goal category also be included. With that, you can then go to the detailed sections for more information.

Partners agreed that the sheet was easy to understand. The group also agreed that the current draft of the Evaluation Criteria was ready to move forward for public comment at the open houses.

Review and Approve Evaluation Criteria

The project team has revised the Evaluation Criteria per comments received at the December 15th CWG meeting and via email from the partners. Comments received were generally complimentary. Included in the draft version distributed to the partners is an explanation of how the Evaluation Criteria will be used in the fatal flaw and then detailed screening processes. The fatal flaw analysis or initial screening of projects will use a selection of "fatal flaw," not necessarily more important, criteria. Once this preliminary screening is done, the long list of alternatives will be screened of projects that are not feasible due to certain prohibitive factors (i.e., project cost is too high,

there is too large of an impact to sensitive habitat, etc.). The asterisk (*) indicates the criteria to be used in the initial screening/fatal flaw analysis. These criteria currently include:

- Historical/Cultural/Architectural Resources
- Natural Environmental Effects
- Project Costs and Benefits

Partners agreed that, per the SR 169 CWG, safety be added to the list of criteria used in the fatal flaw analysis. Projects that would worsen pedestrian or vehicle safety should be thrown out. Other changes suggested by the SR 169 CWG, such as adding crossings for transit stops in the safety criterion, will be incorporated.

On page 7 under comprehensive plans, the SR 164 communities, not the SR 169 communities, should be listed.

King County, in response to a question that came up in the SR 169 Corridor Working Group meeting, clarified that agricultural land is considered by the County as land in agricultural production districts or in the Farmland Preservation Plan. Partners expressed that it will be important to be clear about King County's position on agricultural lands at the open houses. The County's policy may restrict the ability of partner jurisdictions to implement important improvements along the corridor. The County agreed that they take the protection of farmland very seriously but also recognize the need to find the balance of interests along the corridor including safety and mobility. Once the group has the opportunity to focus on specific improvements for the corridor, it will have to find the appropriate balance among all criteria.

Under the third bullet under the Transit/HOV Use and Functionality criterion, 'transit dependent areas' should be changed to 'transit service areas.'

Under the Pedestrian and Bicycle Access criterion, 'access' should be changed to 'mobility' and 'crosswalks' should be changed to 'crossings.'

Under Project Costs and Benefits, the metric for cost effectiveness is person-hours saved, but it should also consider the accidents avoided, as that is a benefit that can be had from any improvement as well.

Partners approved the SR 164 Evaluation Criteria, pending any necessary changes to be made by the project team to the document as identified by the CWG partners at the meeting.

**Public
Comment**

Dennis Swanson, CSE, wanted to share some perceptions on how local citizens may perceive the current corridor study process with the CWG partners. Dennis did not feel that the meeting minutes from the December CWG fully represented the discussion and comments made by his organization. Dennis was encouraged to provide feedback on the meeting minutes when they are sent out for public review.

Dennis also expressed that he and other citizens, including other members of CSE, feel that it is important for the Muckleshoot Tribe to make a serious commitment to the funding of road improvement projects, and not just leave the burden on the taxpayers. He reiterated that the Tribe confirmed that parts of their land along the corridor will be developed with more urban uses which causes more concern on this issue.

Dennis also cautioned the WSDOT project team and the CWG partners that they

should be prepared to address local citizens who attend the upcoming Open Houses. These citizens are likely to say they are tired of hearing excuses from the State and their local jurisdictions about the traffic situation along SR 164 and want to see improvements made.

Next Steps The next CWG meeting will be held following the March Public Open House Series. A date and time has not been established.

Action Items:

- Partners are to send Seth Stark, WSDOT all additions/revisions to the draft Segment Problem Statements by Tuesday, February 15th.
- Partners will send Kristine, EnviroIssues, what dates they plan to attend the Open Houses.
- WSDOT will send the revised Evaluation Criteria for final review and approval.
- EnviroIssues will write a meeting summary for the CWG Meeting and send it to the partners for review.

Upcoming Meetings

- Public Open House: March 3rd, 4:30-8:30pm, Enumclaw High School, Enumclaw
- Public Open House: March 8th, 4:30-8:30pm, Philip Starr Center, Muckleshoot Reservation
- Public Open House: March 10th, 4:30-8:30pm, Chinook Elementary, Auburn

Handouts

- CWG Session Agenda
- December 15th SR 164 CWG Meeting Summary
- SR 1694Vision Statement
- SR 164 RDP Key Definitions
- SR 164 RDP Process and Schedule Flowchart
- SR 164 RDP Draft Table of Contents
- Map of SR 164 Segments
- SR 164 Draft Segment Problem Statements
- Example Screening Matrix using Evaluation Criteria
- SR 164 Revised Draft Evaluation Criteria